

The Lower Westside

9. The Lower Westside

Carol Snook Weare

From a vantage point along Loma Alta Drive, which curves around the eastern side of the Mesa, the Lower Westside neighborhood extends for two blocks straight ahead to the railroad track and the freeway, and stretches for about seven blocks between West Carrillo Street and West Montecito Street. From above, the area presents a mosaic of small homes, duplexes and triplexes, and large, flat-topped apartment buildings, linked irregularly by narrow, dead-end roads.

Descending the hill onto West Canon Perdido Street, and passing through the densely populated neighborhood, what is most striking are the diverse styles, ages, and conditions of the buildings. Well-maintained, turn-of-the-century houses are surrounded by a greater number of frame cottages and stucco bungalows, many of which have not survived their fifty-plus years gracefully, and some of which appear uninhabitable. Small apartment houses extend the length of narrow lots, and up the street stand their



An early view of the Lower Westside north of De la Guerra Street shows Judge Packard's home and two-story winery at middle left. (Source: Santa Barbara Historical Society)

larger counterparts, the twelve to seventy-unit apartment complexes. Before dusk, traffic zips along San Pascual Street, slowed by an occasional stop sign, but cars are barely able to pass each other on Wentworth and Orange Avenues, where parked vehicles line both sides of the street. On Wentworth, many of the parked cars, trucks, and buses look lived-in or abandoned.

In some ways this secluded neighborhood in the shadow of the Mesa is one that much of the rest of the city has either forgotten about or seems to avoid. It holds about 2,500 people within its 135.5 acres, a higher concentration of people per acre than in any other section of Santa Barbara. It ranks third highest of the city's twenty-six neighborhoods in terms of the number of people per room. Approximately eighty percent of the Lower Westsiders are renters, many are City College students, and about ten percent of the residents are unemployed: three characteristics which help explain why a large number of people move in and out of the neighborhood fairly regularly.¹

Nonetheless, the Lower Westside is an appealing place to settle, if only temporarily, for at least two practical reasons. It is near City College, the beach, downtown, and the freeway. More importantly, it is one of the few areas in Santa Barbara where lower to middle-income working families, singles, and students can find a vacancy and affordable rent, or a relatively reasonably priced home.

* * *

SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

The Lower Westside's agricultural potential was what attracted its earliest settlers. In 1850 the entire Westside, between Mission Creek and the Mesa, was open grazing range and farmland. Gradually, five-acre farms were developed on the Lower Westside, an area of slightly hilly, moist terrain, sheltered from ocean breezes (and late afternoon sun) by the mesa.² Almost forty years later, when the Southern Pacific Railroad completed its tracks paralleling Rancheria Street, Sutton and Del Monte Avenues had been laid out and several blocks had been extensively subdivided -- between Canon Perdido and Ortega Streets; between Cota and Haley Streets, east of San Pascual Street; and further south, in the Ladera tract. The largest parcels of land still belonged to prominent Santa Barbara families, including the Packards, the Ords, the Keenans, and the Hillers.³ Judge Albert Packard, whose estate extended for 200 acres northwest of Canon Perdido and Rancheria Streets, had made a name for himself through imported fruit cultivation, olive oil production, and winemaking. His two-story winery, "La Bodega," reputed to be the largest adobe in the state, remained on the corner of West Carrillo and San Pascual Streets from 1865 until 1959, when it was torn down for apartments.⁴

By the turn of the century the secluded neighborhood of well-to-do farmers had begun to respond to the needs of an expanding, diversifying city. A pamphlet written in 1895 stated that the demand for artisans, laborers, and clerks in Santa Barbara was "small and uncertain," and its author discouraged people in those

occupations (at least those without means) from coming here "expecting to make a livelihood by their earnings."⁵ Between 1900 and 1920, however, the city's population doubled to almost 20,000, creating not only a larger pool of job seekers, but a larger group of consumers as well.⁶ New homes, motels, restaurants, and shops were built to house, employ and serve the new residents and the ever-present tourist population. Incomes were not high, but work was available for men in the building trades, and for retail clerks, expressmen, laundryworkers, and domestic servants. The Lower Westside, along with the Eastside, housed much of the labor force that settled in Santa Barbara.

Around the turn of the century small homes began to fill in the property between the few farmhouses near West Montecito Street and those scattered around the northern part of the neighborhood. San Pascual Street, now a busy thoroughfare, was then just a dirt road that would not be paved until 1927.⁷ By 1915, eighteen of the twenty parcels on Orange Avenue had been developed.⁸ Nevertheless, a resident who settled on the Lower Westside in 1917 described the southern end of the neighborhood as still "a kind of wilderness."⁹

The neighborhood developed rapidly during the late 1910s and 1920s. The four homes along West Canon Perdido Street increased to twenty-two, and some thirty new houses were constructed on San Pascual Street. In just four years, between 1922 and 1926, fourteen families settled on the east side of San Andres Street, across

from the John H. Peshine estate.¹⁰ By the end of the decade each dead-end street extending west from San Pascual was becoming well-populated; thirteen homes were on Fremont Avenue, and fifteen had been built on West Haley Street (now Coronel Place).¹¹ Only a few sections had sidewalks, but most of the neighborhood's streets had recently been paved with asphalt on a concrete base.¹²

Thus, by 1930 the Lower Westside contained many new houses and older homes, occupied by some 300 households. The average new house was a one-story, three or four-room dwelling, measuring about 25' by 30' on a lot of 50' by 125', and cost between \$1,750 and \$4,000 to construct. Detached one-car, and occasionally two-car, garages stood beside many homes, although they apparently did not become standard until later in the decade. Some lots also contained a small barn, a chicken house, a workshop, or a storage shed.¹³ Neighbors often lived close to each other, but front and back yard space, gardens, and scattered undeveloped lots minimized the feeling of proximity.

Slightly more than one-third of the Lower Westside homes were owner-occupied, a proportion only slightly below the city's median rate of home ownership in 1930.¹⁴ However, homeowners were not distributed evenly throughout the neighborhood; ownership figures range from twelve percent, or one in eight dwellings on Marilla Avenue, to fifty-eight percent, or eleven of the nineteen homes on Orange Avenue. About half of the homes on San Pascual, Rancheria, West

SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Cota, West Figueroa, and Sutton were occupied by their owners.¹⁵ One resident commented that although many homes were rented, their owners were not strangers to the neighborhood. Some actually lived there, and others would visit occasionally to make repairs.¹⁶

Although the Lower Westside was perhaps the most promising neighborhood for lower to middle-income people hoping to buy a home, it was only with assistance from family and friends that some young working couples were able to strike out on their own. Emilia Arellanes, a resident of San Pascual Street for almost fifty years, remembers the encouragement she and her husband received from his great aunt, Rebecca Ord Peshine, mistress of a large estate on San Andres Street and owner of much of the land south of it. In 1915 and 1916 she financed the construction of a pair of two-story homes on San Pascual, one for the Arellaneses and another for her godson, John Anchordoquy, the son of a Basque couple in her employ. Another newlywed couple, Isaac and Joy Bonilla, moved into their new home on West Ortega Street in 1924. The house was financed by a friend of the family, who paid \$750 for the 210' x 90' lot, \$3,250 for construction, and supplied furnishings as well. The Bonillas finished repaying the debt several years later.¹⁷

The availability of "Pacific Ready-Cut" houses, which were popular in Santa Barbara during the 1920s and 1930s, allowed a family to buy a ready-made dwelling, have it hauled to their lot, and erect it with the help of friends and neighbors. Several of these convenient houses were built on Fremont Avenue and San

SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Andres Street. Some families who were not interested in pre-fabricated units, nonetheless used the company's various house plans for design inspiration.¹⁸ Some residents moved homes from other parts of the city to their Lower Westside properties. A long-time resident pointed out a few of these "second-hand houses" on the corner of Del Monte and Marilla Avenues.¹⁹ Occasionally, houses were relocated within the neighborhood as well. During the 1920s, for example, Joseph Sacconaghi moved his home from a small lot on Sutton Avenue to a double lot one and a half blocks down on San Pascual in order to have more garden space for his prize-winning giant chrysanthemums.²⁰

Whether owner-occupied or rented, most Lower Westside homes in 1930 were single-family dwellings, although the residing "family" sometimes included extended family or boarders. Bulging households and tight budgets prompted some homeowners to build small houses or cottages at the rear of their lots for newly-married children, other family members, or unrelated working tenants. The construction of single-family homes slowed dramatically in Santa Barbara during the Depression. Citywide construction peaked in 1930, when 295 homes were built. Only sixty-three new homes were built two years later, and home building ground nearly to a halt in 1934, when only twelve single-family homes were constructed. However, in the following year the building figures quadrupled, and they continued to rise until 1940.²¹

Those who did not want, or could not afford to buy or rent single-family homes had other

options as early as the 1920s. There were a few clusters of cottages called "Bungalow Courts" on West Canon Perdido, De la Guerra, and Ortega Streets, where working singles or couples could find housing at a reasonable rent.²² The conversion of single-family homes into apartments, and the construction of studio or one-bedroom units to the rear of single-family dwellings increased. At 618-620 West Canon Perdido Street a duplex and three-car garage were constructed in 1926, and three years later the two-story home across the street, dating from before the turn of the century, was converted to a duplex.²³

The Lower Westside's small homes were built by and for people with limited income. This was clearly a working class neighborhood of what were predominantly blue-collar wage earners. An overwhelming majority of the heads of households in 1930 were engaged in skilled work as construction workers, auto mechanics, shoe repairmen, fishermen, and cooks, for example; had unskilled jobs as oilworkers, drivers, or general laborers; or held domestic positions as chauffeurs or gardeners. A smaller number were salesmen, stockkeepers, clerks, or bookkeepers; and even fewer were proprietors of small businesses such as retail stores, meat markets, and restaurants.²⁴

A healthy proportion of the neighborhood's wage earners were employed in some phase of the construction trade, reflecting this industry's phenomenal pre-Depression growth in Santa Barbara (due in part to rebuilding after the 1925 earthquake). Carpenters, stonemasons, cement workers, lathers, painters, pipefitters, and foremen lived

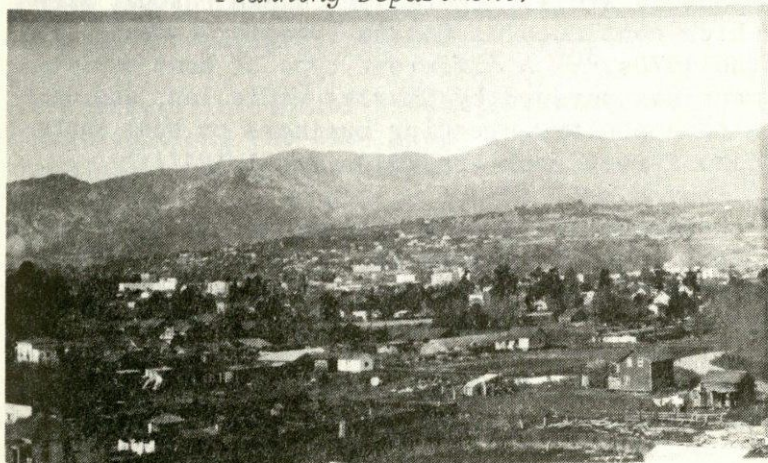


This well-maintained home at 722 San Pascual Street was constructed by an Italian stonemason just before the turn of the century.

on the Lower Westside, and building permits indicate that they built some of their own and their neighbors' homes. This tradition dated back to the turn of the century when three Italian stonemasons, Emilio Rezonico, Natale Bazzi, and David Serena arrived and built some of the first homes on San Pascual Street. Their stonework distinguishes several of the older homes in the neighborhood, but their handiwork is perhaps more visible in homes, stone walls, gates, curbs, hitching posts and patios in the wealthier residential areas of Mission Canyon, the Riviera, and Montecito.²⁵

Some Lower Westsiders worked in J.Y. Parker's Ladera Street brickyard, tucked against the mesa in the marshy southern end of the neighborhood. A few brickmakers had operated at this site and another on Rancheria Street since before the turn of the century, capitalizing on the availability of clay from the hillside. The brickyard achieved a degree of local prominence during the years from the 1910s to the 1930s under the management of Parker, who was then one of Santa Barbara's most successful building contractors. His yard, with its large brick kilns and smokestack, remained a part of the neighborhood landscape through the 1950s.²⁶ An early McKinley School PTA president remembers a campaign which they initiated during the 1930s to eliminate a mosquito problem at the brickyard,

The Ladera Street area in 1925, as seen from the mesa. Present Cliff Drive is at right; the white home at left still stands on West Gutierrez Street. (Courtesy Santa Barbara Planning Department)



SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

below the new elementary school. The sparsely developed, somewhat swampy area around Ladera Street stood apart as the least attractive part of the Lower Westside. A long-time resident noted that this "depressed" section near the brickyard contained a small community of workers who lived in "low-class houses." He recalled, "If you were down by the brickyard, then that was bad. You were in a bad area."²⁷

Several residents ran small businesses from their homes. Involvement in the moving business was almost a neighborhood tradition. Homer Duffy, whose transfer operation was absorbed in the late 1920s by Bekins Van & Storage, had started a decade earlier as the proprietor of Montecito Transfer Company on West Ortega Street.²⁸ Brothers Frank and Luigi Bonazzola began a trucking and transfer business from Frank's home on Wentworth Avenue in the 1920s which continued for over thirty years.²⁹ Another pair of Italians, Abbondio Bazzi and Marco Goggia, opened a similar operation on San Pascual Street which continued as Goggia Transfer Company into the 1970s.³⁰ A different type of home employment was pursued by Charles McClellan, who operated a poultry breeding business on West Montecito Street from the 1910s until 1941.³¹

Sizeable gardens filled the yards of many Lower Westside homes, and a few provided their owners with a livelihood. John Millet had a truck garden on his lot, which covered the western half of the block between West Ortega and West Cota Streets.³² Pete Rodoni had a barn and a well on his large lot on the corner

of San Pascual and Cota, and made a living peddling the corn, green limas, and root vegetables he grew there. It may have been his Italian voice that an early resident recalls hearing in the early mornings as he coaxed the horse that pulled his vegetable cart. Before his early death in 1934, Rodoni had embraced the new technology and was selling his produce from the back of a Ford truck.³³

Those seeking employment outside the home did not have far to go. Crossings at every east-west street allowed Lower Westsiders to walk to work at numerous jobs east of the railroad-tracks -- at Golden State and Enterprise dairies, the telephone company, Enterprise Laundry, gas stations and garages, and many State Street-area restaurants, grocery, drug, and clothing stores. Many households contained two or more breadwinners: husband and wife, sometimes joined by working children; a working widow with a son or daughter; or a pair of single men or women who combined incomes to make rent or mortgage payments.³⁴

Workers in similar trades sometimes were clustered along the same block (or residents occasionally entered a neighbor's business or line of work), as on Orange Avenue, where two oilworkers, two stonemasons and three carpenters lived within the same block. However, occupational titles in the 1929-30 City Directory generally reflected a remarkable diversity of employment among neighbors on a given block. A vivid example was on West Ortega Street, where residents in 1930 included a pastor, a chauffeur,

SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

a barber, a mechanic, a tree surgeon, a salesman, a fire department engineer, and a dairy superintendent.³⁵ Long-time residents concur in the view that theirs was a neighborhood of independent, hard-working people, who were willing to pursue almost any honest work that was available. This resourcefulness would prove to be a tangible asset during the Depression. One man observed, "I don't know if any of them were on relief, and if they were wealthy, they never showed it."³⁶

The Lower Westside has been more ethnically diverse than most Santa Barbara neighborhoods. Although Anglos (including Irish and Germanic-surnamed people) were a clear majority in 1930, particularly in the northern end of the neighborhood, a number of Italian, Hispanic, Basque, and Oriental-surnamed families had settled there. On West Haley Street, for example, Walter Scuitti lived across the street from Charles Espinosa, who lived next door to Suychira Hagiya and down the block from J. W. Burnett and Sven Svenningson.³⁷ Then, as now, a definite distinction was made between different groups of Hispanic-surnamed people. Judgment of neighbors sometimes hinged on their lineage -- how closely they were related to Santa Barbara's "first families," and what percentage Spanish or Indian inheritance they claimed -- or on an evaluation of their lifestyle. Apparently social contact between neighbors of different nationalities rarely extended beyond the polite level. Regardless of ethnic distinctions, each person had his own friends and activities, and was content to offer greetings in passing, watch one another's

children grow up, and remain friendly neighbors, but not necessarily good friends.³⁸

The Italians were then the dominant non-Anglo group within the Lower Westside, and seemed to perceive the neighborhood in terms of their own strong sense of community. Josephine Bonazzola's comment that the Lower Westside was "one big family; we were all friends," might more accurately be qualified as a testimonial to the close ties between the numerous Italian families who settled there between 1900 and 1930. Twenty percent of the households on San Pascual Street were Italian in 1930, as opposed to the seven percent of Hispanic origin.³⁹ The two square block area between West Cota and West De La Guerra Streets contained the largest concentration of Italians, including families such as the Rodoni's, the Sacconaghi's, the Serena's, the Erbeti's, the Bazzi's, the Goggia's, the Crespi's, the Balbiani's, and the Bonazzola's. Several families stayed in the neighborhood for generations, and their children occasionally intermarried. During World War II Italians from the prisoner of war camp in the county were sometimes invited into the homes of Lower Westsiders on the weekend.⁴⁰

The homes of several Lower Westside Italians were either built with full cellars, or were later raised for the excavation of a cellar in order to accommodate winemaking, a home industry that was a vital part of the Italian tradition. Treasury Department stamps authorizing the production of wine for family consumption were purchased annually for twenty dollars. Of course

many men were accustomed to regular consumption--packed in their lunch, with the evening meal, in their coffee, and sometimes in between. Egidio Serena remembers that the 300-gallon yield from one ton of Zinfandel grapes was often insufficient for a year of family use and entertaining, and the mashing and fermenting process would be repeated.⁴¹ One resident reminisced, "during grape season, this neighborhood at night, you could just smell the wine . . . it was beautiful."⁴²

It was within this community of ethnically diverse working families that the Lower Westside children grew up in the 1930s. There were plenty of other children to spend free time with, playing games in small yards or vacant lots, in the street, or at the McKinley playground; walking to the corner grocery, or further to Pershing Park; or exploring the poison ivy-filled bushes at the base of the mesa. A resident who grew up on West Gutierrez Street in the 1940s remembers riding her horse on the vacant property on nearby Ladera Street.⁴³ Many children had aunts, uncles, or grandparents living in the neighborhood for regular visiting.

Most Lower Westside youngsters attended public school at McKinley Elementary, located on Haley and Castillo Streets until 1932, when a new \$670,000 McKinley building was completed on the mesa, overlooking the neighborhood.⁴⁴ A path at the foot of the hill allowed children to make their way up to school and back. Because the McKinley district's population had not yet swelled with mesa development, the building

easily accommodated the 200-some children who attended school.⁴⁵ The elementary school was a center of after-school activity. McKinley had a tradition of parental involvement dating from 1907, when parents at the old school organized the first Parent-Teacher Association in the city. In the new building the PTA initiated an assortment of projects, including a visual education program, which were financed by benefit carnivals and enchilada dinners.⁴⁶

A special feature of the McKinley PTA was the "Father's Council," created in an effort to get fathers more involved in their childrens' intellectual and social development. In 1937 a McKinley father who was a News-Press columnist came to the Father's Council concerned over statistics presented at a recent meeting of the newspaper staff and the Chief of Police, the probation officer, and the truancy officer. The formation of neighborhood "gangs" had increased, truancy had become a serious problem, and "the kids in Santa Barbara were getting out of control."⁴⁷

Thus began the McKinley, or West Side, Boy's Club. A flyer distributed to McKinley fathers inviting them to an organizational bean roast emphasized the "crying need for a Boy's Club or similar rallying place for youngsters."⁴⁸ The new group's aim was not to attract boys away from existing clubs, such as the YMCA, the St. Mary's Boy's Club on the Eastside, or Boy Scout Troop 11, which met in a basement room at McKinley.⁴⁹ The Westside Boy's Club was targeted specifically toward some twenty-five

potential gang leaders, truants, and other troublemakers from the west side of town, whose names were obtained from school principals, the probation officer, and the "hookey cop."⁵⁰ Although the club was an independent organization, each McKinley principal automatically became a member of its board of directors.⁵¹ The vacant fire station on Haley Street was purchased from the city for one dollar, and someone volunteered to move it to the old McKinley property. Ike Bonilla, the club's first secretary-treasurer, remembers that during one door-to-door fund-raising campaign a woman gave him a blank check to be used at Osborne's Bookstore to set up a clubhouse library. Club membership expanded and physical fitness was stressed under the leadership of Tommy Hart, a "golden gloves" boxer from the state teacher's college on the Riviera. Bonilla recalls that all but a couple of the first group of boys developed into "solid citizens," and three became club heroes during their military service several years later.⁵² What is significant about the formation of the Westside Boy's Club is that the city, the Police Department, concerned parents, and numerous volunteers recognized and met a need to redirect the energies of young people into productive, organized recreation.

The Lower Westside's physical appearance did not change dramatically between 1930 and the end of World War II. The bulk of the streetwork and home construction had been accomplished during the 1910s and 1920s. This deceleration in building activity was the norm all over the

city due to the impact of the Depression and the associated drop in population growth from a 72.9% increase in the 1920s, to 4% during the 1930s.⁵³ Citywide, single-family home construction had dipped to the low figure of about five homes a year between 1942 and 1944, though it shot up again by 1947, when 464 new single family dwellings were built in the city, far surpassing the peak of 1930, with its 295 new homes.⁵⁴

During the 1940s and 1950s the Lower West-side was suspended between the single family housing boom of the 1920s and the intensive development of multiple-unit housing that would follow twenty years later. Less than one-fifth of the structures standing in the neighborhood in 1970 had been built between 1940 and 1960.⁵⁵ Eleven new homes were constructed on San Pascual Street during this period, and other were completed on scattered undeveloped lots around the neighborhood, at costs ranging from \$3,000 to \$10,500. Some properties were filled with "second-hand" housing, moved from other locations. In 1956 Amelia Flores had a house moved from Santa Barbara Street to her vacant lot at 831 Orange Avenue, and two years later she added a two-story frame structure from West Carrillo Street which was undoubtedly threatened by upcoming freeway construction.⁵⁶

The tendency, however, was toward increased density on occupied lots, either through additional construction to the rear, or the conversion of existing one-family homes into apartments. Maria Anchordoquy, at 615 San Pascual,

SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

and Verdie Wilson, at 820 Orange Avenue, were two such residents who constructed small homes behind their own after the war.⁵⁷ Other housing activity reported in the building permit files involved the routine maintenance and repair of older homes, and the addition of bedrooms, bathrooms, and porches to accommodate growing families.

Not all homeowners performed needed maintenance work or obtained permits before making additions. In February 1956 a Wentworth Avenue resident phoned the Planning Department to complain about the hazardous conditions on a neighboring property. The owner had converted his home for multiple-family residential use, installing numerous kitchen and plumbing units, none of which was authorized by building permits. The concerned neighbor mentioned the existence of dangerous electrical wiring, faulty plumbing, open garbage piles, and rats, goats, and chickens. The complaint continued: "Five families are reportedly now living at that address, one of them in a 'studio apartment' 68" x 120" in size. Owner contends that he does not require any permits for improvements costing less than \$50.00, which apparently represents the top cost of a new dwelling unit!" The permit file contains no indication of any follow-up action, but does note that the property was sold in 1960, and five years later was reported to have "substandard conditions."⁵⁸ This vivid description of the Wentworth Avenue property illustrates the serious nature of the local housing situation in the 1950s. People were desperate for inexpensive housing, and some

Lower Westsiders were able to provide shelter, supplementing their own incomes in the process, by making inadequate and unauthorized additions or alterations to their living quarters. Perhaps more significant is the fact that the city had no code enforcement procedure to prevent or remedy substandard housing conditions.⁵⁹

Rising construction costs, due to the high cost of materials and labor, were a subject of public concern after World War II.⁶⁰ In 1947 it was announced that building costs were ten percent higher in Santa Barbara than in Los Angeles.⁶¹ The following year the Santa Barbara Citizen's Advisory Council completed a report that outlined the city's housing needs. Although home construction had recently increased, little of what was being built was within the means of those who most needed it. What was necessary, the study said, was more multiple-unit construction to meet the growing demand for affordable rental housing.⁶² Greater awareness of this demand, coupled with zoning which permitted multiple-dwelling (R-3) development near Carrillo Street and between West Haley Street and Cliff Drive, led to the appearance of a number of apartment buildings during the 1950s.⁶³

In 1959 the fourteen-year-old Mesa campus of the University of California's Industrial Arts Department was acquired by what became known as Santa Barbara City College (SBCC). At that time the junior college had 914 day students and 497 evening students, and planned to nearly double enrollment. It was predicted in the 1964 General Plan that 4,500 students would

SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

attend SBCC by 1970.⁶⁴ This expansion of the student population, combined with extensive residential development on the Mesa, increased the flow of traffic along Cliff Drive and through and around the Lower Westside. City College growth had its most profound effect on the neighborhood's housing, as students turned to the quiet neighborhood at the bottom of the hill in search of convenient, affordable rental quarters. Some leased rooms in private homes, while others found lodging in the handful of apartment buildings which included the fifty-four-unit Miramonte complex on Ladera Street, the thirty-two-unit Carrillo Apartments at the head of San Pascual, the Pizzuto Apartments at West Canon Perdido, and two small buildings on West Montecito Street.

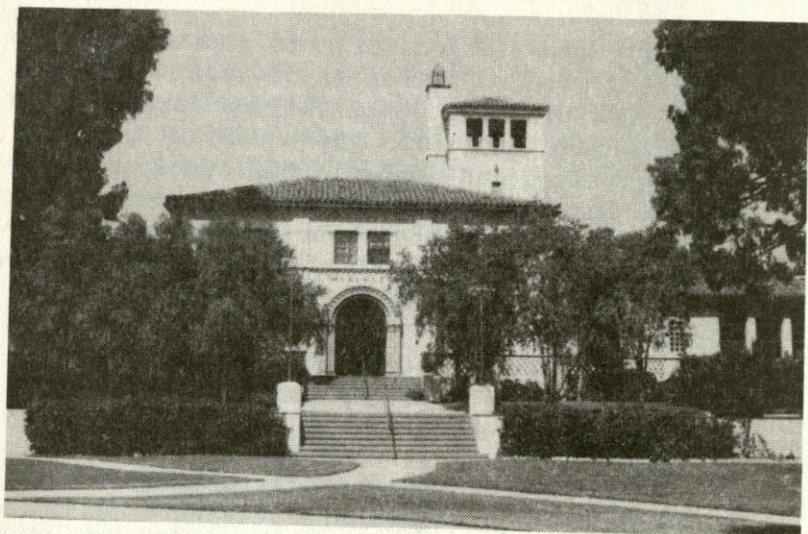
The neighborhood that witnessed and responded to these developments was demographically and socially much the same as it had been in 1930. Its households included a mix of families, young couples, retired people, and single students and workers. Whether due more to war casualties or to natural life cycles, the number of widowed women had increased. There were slightly fewer Italian families in 1951, and significantly more with Hispanic surnames, but at least two-thirds of the Lower Westside's householders had Anglo, French, Irish, or German surnames.⁶⁵ There were few blacks, if any, living there before the 1960s.⁶⁶

The Lower Westside in the postwar period was still a working class neighborhood. There were only a few professionals, and a small number of people who owned or managed businesses,

particularly gas stations or auto repair shops. There were a greater number of clerical workers than in 1930, slightly fewer skilled workers, more semi-skilled workers, and a similar proportion of unskilled and domestic employees. Workplaces for Lower Westsiders tended to be a greater distance away, but home-based businesses -- hair styling, window cleaning, moving and hauling, and even enchilada making -- were still in operation.⁶⁷

Access to more remote parts of the growing city was easier, necessities were still available within walking distance. Schools and churches were not far, Bray's "101" truckstop cafe and other affordable eateries were near Rancheria and Montecito Streets, and several neighborhood groceries provided a range of goods on credit. Mrs. Theresa Lane, followed by Tom and Pat Baird and others, was proprietor of the store on the corner of San Pascual and De la Guerra, now known as the Guadalajara Market. Other corner stores included Schilling's at West Carrillo and San Andres Streets, and the Rancheria Market, which like Bray's Cafe would be razed for the freeway.⁶⁸ Vincente Herrera had just moved into the small home and store on West Haley Street that Sven Svenningson had occupied since 1927.⁶⁹

The Lower Westside children who lived north of De La Guerra Street now attended Wilson School at Anapamu and Rancheria, but most of the neighborhood's elementary age students still climbed up the hill to McKinley.⁷⁰ The post-war boom in housing on the Mesa temporarily disrupted



Most Lower Westside children attended McKinley Elementary School until its closure in 1979. It is now a nursery school and continuation high school.

school life. George Dearmin, former McKinley teacher and principal, remembers that the construction of the Marine Terrace housing complex increased the number of McKinley students, necessitating double sessions in 1953. This overcrowding was relieved the following year when Washington School was completed on the Mesa. Dearmin proudly described McKinley during the 1950s and early 1960s as "the cadillac of Santa Barbara schools," noting that McKinley graduates consistently led the honor roll after they moved on to Santa Barbara Junior High.⁷¹

Although the overall structure of neighborhood life remained fairly constant during and

after the war, there was a high flow of people in and out of the Lower Westside. Allowing for variations between blocks, only one-third of the residents in 1930 lived at the same address ten years later.⁷² However, between 1940 and 1960, and particularly during the 1940s, the turnover was noticeably greater. A dramatic example of this mobility was on Del Monte Avenue, where only one of seventeen families remained through the 1940s. Six of the eighteen families on Orange Avenue in 1940 were still in residence in 1950, but only one stayed through the next decade.⁷³

Population mobility was one feature of Lower Westside life during these years, due partly to war relocations, but it is important to note that these fluctuations were not a new phenomenon. Turnover in the neighborhood has traditionally been high, with some homes changing owners or occupants several times within the decade. Yet among these more transient residents has been a core of families who have lived in the same homes for more than thirty years, and many more who have occupied their homes for at least fifteen or twenty years.⁷⁴

Home ownership among Lower Westside residents has also been irregular. According to the 1951 City Directory entries, slightly more than fifty percent of the neighborhood householders owned their property; a rate that was almost twenty percent higher than that recorded by the directory for the previous two decades, and about equal to the citywide median rate reported by the 1950 census.⁷⁵ It is impossible to generalize about owner-rental tendencies along specific blocks.

SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Whereas only one of seventeen Del Monte Avenue residents was a homeowner in 1940, five of its thirteen residents a decade earlier had been homeowners, and half of the twenty-four households in 1951 and 1960 were homeowners. Currently, approximately one-third of the Del Monte Avenue residents own their property.⁷⁶

The postwar peak in the ratio of owner-occupied to rented dwellings did not last long, due to an increase in the total number of living units through the construction of apartment buildings. By the close of the 1950s it was clear that the Lower Westside's physical characteristics -- a number of neglected older homes, as well as undeveloped parcels at the foot of dead end streets and in the Ladera tract -- made it a prime candidate for high-density housing construction. The rhythm of neighborhood life, therefore, began to change.

Max and Josephine Montoya came to Santa Barbara in 1954 to escape freeway construction in their Los Angeles neighborhood. His income as a painter was high enough to give them some freedom of choice in their house hunting. After considering a \$14,000 two-bedroom home in the San Roque area, they decided instead on a small three-bedroom home on San Pascual Street which cost \$10,500. The Lower Westside, Mrs. Montoya remembers, "wasn't bad at that time," and offered them a quiet, friendly environment in which to raise their three children.⁷⁷

Ironically, the same highway construction that the Montoyas moved away from in Los Angeles began less than a decade later two blocks away

from their home. In the early 1960s the California Department of Transportation continued its work of improving the movement of traffic through the city along U.S. Highway 101. The new "westside freeway" curved into the neighborhood at West Haley Street, extending a limited access, four-lane divided highway with entrance ramps along Rancheria Street, due east of the Southern Pacific tracks. Those whose homes were not relocated or torn down suffered the inconvenience of dead-ended streets and restricted access to the east side of town. The seven major east-west streets which formerly led across the railroad tracks in the old highway into the downtown area were permanently closed off at Wentworth Avenue. Residents could cross only at Carrillo or Castillo Streets, or via the pedestrian overpass at Ortega Street. Lower Westsiders still complain that the freeway created a barrier along the east edge of the neighborhood, which with the increased traffic flow along Carrillo Street, has made them feel hemmed in and isolated.⁷⁸ Cliff Drive, at the neighborhood's southern end, was widened from two to four lanes in 1968 to open up the bottleneck and create a major arterial for traffic between the Mesa and downtown.⁷⁹

During the late 1960s the Lower Westside shared in the attention being given nationwide to poverty and the problems of economically depressed urban areas. A report issued in 1968 by the State Division of Highways labeled the neighborhood the city's "primary center of poverty and substandard living conditions." A Welfare Department official recalls that in the

1960s, before many of Santa Barbara's poorer residents moved to Isla Vista, the Lower Westside contained a high concentration of welfare recipients.⁸⁰

In 1968 Santa Barbara embarked on its first federally-funded redevelopment effort. The City Council recommended that a mixed residential and commercial area be selected for a facelifting project. Local planners and consultants from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) tentatively decided that the Lower Westside, defined as the 240-acre area bounded by Carrillo, Chapala, West Montecito, and the base of the Mesa bluff, be the target for renewal activity. A report entitled "The Rancheria Redevelopment Project" proposed that high-density senior citizen housing, office space, and a large auto center be built on the east side of the freeway, and that 1,050 dwelling units be constructed west of the freeway in what was labeled a medium-density residential area. Renters occupied a majority of the redevelopment area's 1,460 housing units, 322 of which were classified as deteriorating, and 109 as dilapidated. The report made it clear that a substantial amount of demolition work would be done, and it suggested that some residential construction occur first to provide housing for residents during their "temporary relocation."⁸¹

As of July 18, 1968 all signs continued to point to the selection of the Lower Westside for renewal attention: A News-Press editorial on July 24 commented: "It is conceded that this is not the section of greatest 'need' for upgrading,

which is to be found on the Lower East Side, but it is regarded as the best place to start."⁸² Two days later the Planning Commission endorsed the Rancheria Project. At a special meeting on September 17, however, the City Council concluded that the Rancheria Project was "too broad in scope," and instead announced its intent to direct funds for a smaller housing project on the Eastside. There seems to have been little controversy within the Lower Westside over the initial recommendation or the ultimate selection of the Eastside. One homeowner recalls that he and his neighbors want the additional people and activity that redevelopment would have brought. After the Council's choice of the Eastside project, the News-Press reported that the "city fathers also decided to keep going on a concentrated code enforcement program to keep other neighborhoods from becoming blighted," a promise that has not been kept."⁸³

Multiple-unit construction continued in the Lower Westside on a less dramatic scale without federal assistance. The number of living units on San Pascual Street increased from 95 in 1960, to 145 in 1970. Case Perdido, a complex of five two-story buildings containing sixty-four "low-cost" units (mostly studio apartments), was built on West Canon Perdido Street, on the site of Judge Packard's old mansion.⁸⁴ West Cota Street experienced significant development during the decade, growing from 19 households to over 120. The Executive View, or "Seven-Eleven" Apartments, containing seventy-one studio and one-bedroom units (and a swimming pool) were constructed in 1966 at 711 West Cota Street. These have since been purchased by a hotel chain and are now rented



The construction of apartment buildings in the last decade has dramatically increased the density of the Lower Westside.

on a daily and weekly basis. Twenty-six units were added by the completion of the Carla Apartments, and three four-unit buildings were constructed, further increasing the flow of traffic along the narrow street.⁸⁵

The most extensive development occurred during the 1970s on a number of vacant parcels near the Miramonte Apartments at 322 Ladera Street. By the middle of the decade the one and a half square block area between West Gutierrez and Cliff Drive had filled up with several small apartment buildings, three larger structures, and a seventy-four unit complex known as Casa

Bella.⁸⁶ In 1974 the Santa Barbara Planning Task Force study, The Impacts of Growth, noted, "The apartment area [Ladera Street] is crowded and the quality of architecture undistinguishable. In some instances, one form of blight has merely been substituted for another."⁸⁷

Census findings in 1970 provide a profile of the Lower Westside consistent with the neighborhood's forty year trends, though in some aspects there have been changes. The owner-renter ratio had shifted, due to increased apartment construction, so that eighty-one percent of the housing units were occupied by renters.⁸⁸ It is safe to assume that this percentage has since risen, since the census was taken while much of the new multiple-unit housing was either under construction or still in the planning stage. The bulk of the new units were studio and one-bedroom apartments, which tended to attract a greater proportion of working singles, married couples, and one-child families.

The mean age of Lower Westside residents in 1970 was 29.5 years, with thirty percent under age eighteen, and eight percent age sixty-five and over. The mean household income was \$7,021, the ninth lowest of the city's twenty-six neighborhoods. More significant was the fact that thirty percent of the households had incomes under \$4,000, and only ten percent earned over \$15,000. Of the 2,439 people living in the neighborhood, sixty-one percent were in the work force and ten percent were unemployed, a higher rate of unemployment than in any other part of the city except West Downtown. Although eight percent of the residents had professional

occupations, most were employed in service, clerical, or crafts positions. The census found that mobility was high. About half of the residents had moved into their home or apartment within the year, one quarter had lived there for two to five years, one-eighth for six to twenty years, and one-tenth of the Lower Westsiders had been in the same home for twenty years or more.⁸⁹

In 1972, four years after the Rancheria Redevelopment proposal was rejected, the federal government turned to the Lower Westside. In the spring of 1973 the city's first HUD-funded low-income housing project was completed at 512 West Montecito Street. The thirty-two three, four, and five bedroom apartments in the complex were to be occupied by a racially mixed group of low-income families, as stipulated by HUD. Rents were calculated on twenty-five percent of each family's adjusted gross income. The city's Housing Authority continues to emphasize that public housing is only a temporary means of assistance, and tenants are expected to move out into the regular market once their incomes increase. By March 1973, before the complex was even completed, 477 applications had been received. The waiting list is now so long that the application files have been closed for almost two years.⁹⁰

The construction of the Montecito Street housing project stimulated another neighborhood development. HUD donated half an acre of land adjacent to the apartment complex to the city, and in 1975 the City Council authorized \$15,000 for irrigation systems, tools, and a part-time

garden expert in order to turn this lot on Rancheria Street and another on the Eastside into fertile areas. Rancheria Gardens is now managed by the Recreation Department and the Community Environmental Council. There are currently about thirty plots being cultivated by twenty-four individuals and a few groups, a privilege which costs them fifteen dollars a year. The abundance of apartment buildings in the neighborhood makes this garden space a potentially vital asset; however transiency and amateur gardening skills, which have in some cases produced discouraging results, have limited the popularity of the garden.⁹¹

Maintenance of buildings is a real problem for the owners and renters of newer, as well as older homes and apartments on the Lower Westside. In 1970, one-third of the neighborhood's housing units were at least thirty years old, and given the growing number of multiple-unit buildings, the percentage of old structures was even higher.⁹² In 1976 the Home Rehabilitation Loan Program was created within the Community Development Department to assist owners unable to afford needed repairs. Loan assistance has since been targeted toward owner-occupied dwellings in five census tracts around the city, areas selected on the basis of the age and condition of the housing, the percentage of overcrowded units, and the percentage of low-income, as well as minority, residents. Since 1976, eighteen loans have been approved for the rehabilitation of twenty-one units on the Lower Westside, a quantity that is less than that on the Eastside, but is the median for the target areas. Unfortunately,



Most Lower Westside homes are small and old, and many are in disrepair, like this 77-year old house on West Ortega Street.

despite generous borrowing terms, many low-income families still cannot afford the costs of repairs.⁹³

The high percentage of rental properties on the Lower Westside demands a different tactic. The Community Development Department secured money for rental rehabilitation in 1980, but federal funds were frozen before any planned projects were initiated. The department has since received a minimal amount of funding from the state for a similar effort, still in the planning stage as of 1981. To avoid tenant displacement after the improvements, the program

will require a six-year period of rent stabilization. It is expected that these terms will not appeal to the syndicates who own the larger apartment buildings in the neighborhood. Those owners who are expected to be more receptive to such assistance will probably be those who already feel some responsibility for maintaining their buildings.⁹⁴

The problems of physical maintenance and unfair tenant treatment have brought protests from occupants of several Lower Westside apartment buildings. Due to a general lack of political and economic power among neighborhood renters, and the shortage of affordable housing options elsewhere in the city, the protesters against such abuses have been slow to organize; it has been a frustrating learning process. The Rent Control Alliance, known as the Santa Barbara Tenants Union, has been instrumental in these attempts to correct uninhabitable conditions and preserve the neighborhood's low-income and Chicano community. Although the concern over physical conditions has been very real, the key issue has been perceived to be racial in nature -- landlords were believed to be pushing Chicanos and blacks out of some of the city's only available rental housing. Santa Barbara has no just-cause eviction ordinance, therefore landlords are not required to justify the expulsion of tenants.⁹⁵ In 1978 rent strikes based upon allegations of racist management policies, lack of repairs, and unjust rent increases, took place in the 300-block of Ladera Street, and the 600-block of West Gutierrez. In the first case the strikes, according to Don Combs of the Tenants Union, met with

only partial success;⁹⁶ in the latter, there was complete failure.⁹⁷

Greater tenant unity and the continued support of the Tenants Union led to a higher proportion of tenant victories in the following year. In the fall of 1980 Tenants Union members picketed and filed complaints with landowners in the 600-block of West Gutierrez. Thirty-nine tenants of the Casa Bella complex (a seventy-four unit development at 620 West Gutierrez) wrote to their landlords alleging problems of "severe cockroach infestation, racist evictions, lack of repairs, and management harrassment." After receiving no response, Legal Aid Foundation attorneys warned the owners that tenants would withhold rent (a lawful option in cases of uninhabitability) if the landlords would not consent to negotiation. In January 1981 a discrimination lawsuit was filed.⁹⁸

The early tenant crises led to the formation of an important Lower Westside organization which continues to provide mediation assistance, as well as assorted other services, to encourage a feeling of community within the transient neighborhood. The Community Development Task Force, composed of one member from each target area, had been the city's means of satisfying HUD's citizen participation requirement. In 1976 and 1977, Neighborhood Planning Councils were formed on the Eastside and the Westside in order to broaden and improve the effectiveness of neighborhood involvement. Although Lower Westside residents were welcome to participate in the Westside Neighborhood Planning Council, its center's location almost a mile to the north

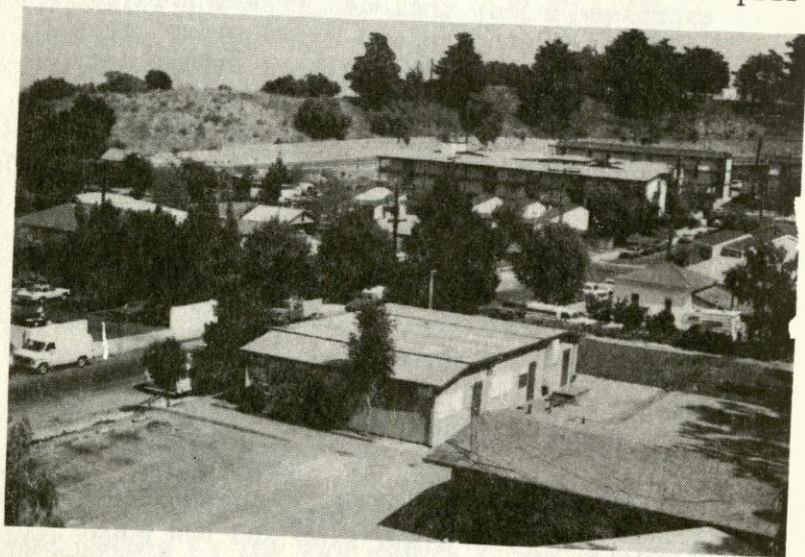
discouraged residents living south of Carrillo Street from becoming involved in its programs. When Ladera Street area residents mobilized to resist rent increases in the fall of 1978, the group became receptive to the suggestion to organize a Neighborhood Planning Council in their locale.⁹⁹

On October 6, 1978 neighborhood people met for the first time to draw up a list of needs. A community center was their top priority, and the hope was that they could acquire the portable units of the La Cuesta Special Education School on Ladera Street which was scheduled for closing. Other expressed needs included street repairs, a stop sign at Montecito and Cliff Drive, repair of the collapsing hill and walkway behind some Ladera apartments, a child care center, parks and playgrounds, a food cooperative, and more influence on school district policies, specifically in order to place Spanish-speaking aides in the classroom.¹⁰⁰

Work began immediately on the identified problems. Less than three weeks later, encouraged by a supporting petition with more than one hundred neighborhood signatures, the City Council authorized the creation of five one-year CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act] positions for the food co-op, which opened in the spring. As of 1981 the co-op was supported by the Community Action Commission and had about eighty paying members, although one worker complained that it was difficult to get most of them involved in the store's operation. In January 1979 the City Council approved \$63,000 of HUD Community Development Block Grant money

for two years of rent and operating costs for a neighborhood center. In July the Santa Barbara Board of Education approved a two-year lease (\$5,000 a year) on the La Cuesta site and the purchase of two of its portable buildings for the Lower Westside Neighborhood Center. Luis Sanchez started as the center's director in February 1980.¹⁰¹

Two and a half years later the center is providing a variety of services geared toward the neighborhood's low-income and Chicano population. Parent-youth and alcoholism counseling are offered, and before funding was cut in April



The Lower Westside Neighborhood Center and the food co-op occupy former La Cuesta High School facilities on Ladera Street, near Cliff Drive.

1981 a health clinic provided free screenings once a week. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes have been offered for two years, and non-English speakers may receive translation assistance at the center. All meetings, announcements, and newsletters are bilingual. About one hundred children participate in the center's youth activity program, through which they see films, go on field trips, and have parties, financed by money they earn through an active recycling program, beach cleanup drives, and car washes.¹⁰²

The importance of these activities to many Lower Westsiders was made evident at the June 9, 1981 meeting of the City Council, when proposed budget cuts to community services were on the agenda. The Department of Housing and Urban Development had requested a re-allocation of federal money to Santa Barbara, resulting in a loss of \$100,000 in funding for the neighborhood programs. City staff presented a revised budget that would have provided the Lower Westside Center with rent, but no money for staff or activities. It was proposed that the Lower Westside program be eliminated, and that community services be consolidated at the Franklin and Westside centers.¹⁰³

A group of more than twenty Lower Westside children presented Mayor David Shiffman with petitions signed by neighborhood residents urging that the center be kept alive. Numerous representatives from other city programs and neighborhood residents spoke up to praise the center and Director Luis Sanchez. Mary Ann Roll, a Lower Westside Neighborhood Planning Council

member urged: "The center embodies the Lower Westside neighborhood. It enables us to work together." After an hour of endorsements and a brief slide presentation, the Council voted to find some way within the budget to continue support to the center.¹⁰⁴

While the center does indeed embody the spirit and concerns of one segment of the Lower Westside, it is not an institution that binds the entire neighborhood together. Its programs appeal particularly to the younger and needier people in the neighborhood, with and without children, many of whom live in apartment complexes near the center. Because it is situated on a dead end street at the foot of the mesa, it is not a facility that most residents in the northern part of the Lower Westside would normally drive by; some confessed that they were unaware of its existence. An elderly, Spanish-surnamed man who resents receiving bilingual flyers from the neighborhood center insisted, "We're not interested. That's for the Mexicans -- they run it." ¹⁰⁵

There is a degree of tension within the Lower Westside between the well-established and the newer residents. Those who grew up in the neighborhood and are now raising families there, and those who raised children and are now growing older in the neighborhood are distressed about qualitative changes they have witnessed, whether a function more of the age, financial position, tenant status, ethnicity, student status, or perceived lack of community commitment of the newcomers. Vandalism is more prevalent than formerly, San Pascual Street is

now a "racetrack," a greater number of the children are disrespectful and undisciplined, and more residents seem to lack pride in their property, whether owned or rented. Santa Barbara City College students are categorized by some as loud party throwers, and at least one concerned mother tries to shelter her impressionable children from that lifestyle. Unlike the influx of Italians earlier in the century, Mexican immigrants have poured into Santa Barbara and the Lower Westside at a time when population growth has become a touchy subject, jobs are scarce, and housing is costly and hard to find. Lower Westside residents have watched their neighborhood age, and become more crowded and less stable; and some find it easy to blame the new arrivals.¹⁰⁶

The Lower Westside reportedly has the lowest percentage of registered voters of any area in the city -- a distinction related to its high percentage of renters, who generally do not become as politically involved or feel the economic commitment to their neighborhood that homeowners do.¹⁰⁷ For many years residents felt they had a voice in city affairs through the City Council member they elected to represent their ward. Long-time residents remember their councilman stopping through the neighborhood to check on problems (admittedly before election time), or being accessible by phone to listen to complaints. Two labeled the 1968 charter change which abolished the election of council members by ward a "disaster."¹⁰⁸

Some residents recall occasional complaints that were made at City Council meetings about

Lower Westside street and sidewalk conditions. One woman remembers seeing a bus of council members drive through the neighborhood on an informal inspection. "I'm sure it was people from the City Hall -- councilmen, you know. And they can see the streets, they can see everything like I do. They should do something about it, really."¹⁰⁹ Residents feel unable to pay for sidewalk and curb work, are concerned about property tax increases once improvements are made, and in some cases object to constructing sidewalks that would cut into the already-restricted road width and greatly curtail parking. The absence of sidewalks on many Lower Westside streets is particularly dangerous considering the number of children in the neighborhood. In fact it was only through the "Safe Route to School" program, a federally-funded



Potential sidewalk space is used for parking on Fremont Place.

11
effort to improve sidewalks and bikeways around elementary schools, that some of the Lower Westside's more recent improvements were made in 1974.¹¹⁰

Parents are also concerned about the lack of play areas or park space for their children. Parks Director Jerry Ambrose testifies that there is little in the Lower Westside in the way of parks.¹¹¹ Yards are small or non-existent, and the only available play space is on the blacktop at the neighborhood center, at a small playground at Grace Church on San Andres Street, or up the hill at McKinley School.

McKinley School itself is no longer the Lower Westside youngsters' second home. In 1979, as a result of declining enrollments and cuts to the state budget, the Board of Education proposed that three city elementary schools -- McKinley, Wilson, and Lincoln -- be closed or converted to other uses. A report released on January 15 recommended that McKinley house the continuation high school, then known as La Cuesta High School, located in five temporary buildings on Ladera Street (now the neighborhood center). McKinley's kindergarten facilities, built in 1958 and reported to be excellent, would be used by the Santa Barbara Nursery School's day care program. McKinley students would be bused to Monroe and Washington schools on the Mesa.¹¹²

Although McKinley had an enrollment capacity of 588, only 415 pupils (kindergarten through sixth grade) were enrolled in 1978. The Board of Education report mentioned several other



Lacking recreational space, Lower Westside children play in small yards, on the sidewalks, and in the streets.

characteristics of the McKinley student body. It was the most socio-economically segregated public school in Santa Barbara. Thirty percent of its students were white, sixty-five percent were Hispanic, and five percent were "other." Two out of three children received either free or reduced-price lunches. One in three students were from households receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) assistance. In addition, sixty-eight percent of McKinley's students in 1978 read at a level below the fiftieth percentile, a higher percentage of children than at any other public school in the city.¹¹³

At a public hearing on February 26, 1979 several groups expressed concern over McKinley's proposed closing and the new plan, specifically citing the issue of busing and the fear that the needs of low-income bilingual children would not be met adequately at their new schools. McKinley, they felt, should be left open as a bilingual magnet school.¹¹⁴ The board's proposal prevailed, however, and Lower Westside children began to ride the bus to schools on the Mesa in the fall of 1980.

Crime, or the fear of it, pervades Lower Westside life. This is no longer the neighborhood of the 1940s and 1950s when, as one Wentworth Avenue resident recalled, people never locked their doors. The elderly are logically the most concerned about security. One man who keeps his police radio on all day and has a good idea of the type of calls made to the Lower Westside, commented, "I have burglar alarms all over the house, and smoke alarms, and a dog -- we always have a dog. We have our gates locked at all times. We have to after sundown." He and others mentioned the incidence of minor physical assaults and purse snatchings, break-ins, car strippings, and the less personally threatening occurrence of domestic quarrels and narcotics raids in the neighborhood. Two residents were interviewed within a few weeks of a murder which occurred on Ortega Street in April. Most of those interviewed specifically warned against women walking alone through the area after dusk. Police Department statistics justify the rising concern over burglary and assault. Although there were no homicides in the Lower Westside during 1979 and 1980, of the 120-140 major

felonies committed there each year, there were about a dozen crimes against persons, and an average of twenty vehicle thefts and eighty burglaries. 115

The Lower Westside has not been immune from the forces that have changed life in Santa Barbara and the rest of the country. The neighborhood still has a slightly small-town, rural atmosphere in some parts, with its unimproved, tree-lined, dead end streets, small homes, and the green backdrop of the Mesá. But the number of apartment buildings leave no doubt that this is an urban neighborhood, whose density is projected to increase. Santa Barbara City College students have altered the complexion of the Lower Westside, in terms of age group and demand for apartments near campus. There seem to be fewer families and a greater percentage of students; fewer Italians and many more Mexicans. There are families crowded into small apartments, and people reportedly living in garages and in brush that covers the hillside. Residents in 1981 share many of the same day-to-day concerns of their predecessors, but these are made somewhat harsher by the greater density of Santa Barbara, a more restricted job market, and a shortage of housing in the entire South Coast area.

Residents of all ages and backgrounds recognize problems within the neighborhood that they would like to see addressed, whether relating to crime, landlord abuses, traffic, overcrowding, street conditions, the need for park space, vandalism, abandoned cars, the lack of public transportation through the neighborhood,

or poorly maintained homes and yards. The elderly Lower Westsiders are the ones who have witnessed the most dramatic changes in lifestyle over the last thirty years, and it is easy for them to lament the passing of an era and resent the people or values that they feel have brought on these changes. One elderly woman remarked, "We fuss about it, and that's about all." Some of the older residents have left the neighborhood, often on the urging of their grown children. Others would like to move, but feel they are too old to handle the transition, are unsure where they would go, and are reluctant to give up the home they have paid for when its resale value is not adequate to finance as nice a home in another neighborhood. One seventy-year-old man said stubbornly, "I would move away if I had sense. Realtors have called -- I could have sold [my house] several times; people want to buy it. But I don't know. What the hell am I gonna do if I sell it?"¹¹⁶

There is a growing segment of the neighborhood that feels some of the problems can be solved, that their actions will have an effect, and that they can afford to become involved. Their voice is slowly gaining strength through the efforts of the Santa Barbara Tenants Union and the Lower Westside Neighborhood Planning Council. However, given a regular turnover rate in a large number of rental units, in many cases an unfamiliarity with the political process, and in most cases, a lack of economic security and influence, the Lower Westside has not been a cohesive community, organizing for or against developments and issues that affect the neighborhood. The city should be encouraged to become

more responsive to the concerns of those groups of citizens on the Lower Westside who are not accustomed to being heard.

ENDNOTES

1. Santa Barbara Planning Task Force, Neighborhood Fact Book, Volume 2 of Santa Barbara: The Impacts of Growth (1974), pp. 23.3, 23.4, 28.9.
2. Walker Tomkins, Westside, Neighborhood Series #10 (Santa Barbara Board of Realtors, 1980), pp. 2-3.
3. Bird's Eye View of Santa Barbara, California (map, 1877); Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of Santa Barbara, California (New York: The Sanborn Map Co., 1889).
4. The history of Packard's property is summarized in Tomkins, Westside, p. 3; and "64 Low-Cost Rental Units Planned," Santa Barbara News-Press (hereafter SBNP), 21 July 1968.
5. Frank Sands, Santa Barbara at a Glance (Santa Barbara, 1895).
6. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Nineteenth Census of the United States, Population Summary, City of Santa Barbara.

7. 1904 photograph of Lower Westside, photo collection of Isaac Bonilla; Interview with Egidio Serena, 19 May 1981.

8. Santa Barbara City Directory, 1915-16 (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Directory Co., 1915).

9. Interview with Emelia Arellanes, 4 March 1981.

10. The John H. Peshine home at 935 San Andres Street was designed by Los Angeles Architect Myron Hunt and constructed with many imported materials in 1916-17. Since the family sold the house, adobe chapel, stable, and servants' quarters circa 1940, the property has been used for a variety of purposes, including a wedding chapel and honeymoon lodge, a fraternity house, and now an evangelical, non-denominational church. Two more stories were added to the one-story chapel for Sunday school classrooms, and the accessory buildings were razed for a new church addition. Interviews with Werner Kroeker, pastor, Grace Church, 27 February 1981; Emilia Arellanes, 4 March 1981.

11. City Directory, 1915-16; Santa Barbara City Directory, 1922 (Los Angeles: Santa Barbara Directory Co., 1922); Santa Barbara City Directory, 1926 (Santa Barbara: The Schauer Printing Studio, Inc., 1926); Santa Barbara City Directory, including Montecito 1929-30 (Los Angeles: Santa Barbara Directory Co., 1931).

SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

12. Most of the Lower Westside streets were paved in 1927, with the exception of San Andres and W. Canon Perdido, paved in 1917; W. Ortega in 1922; W. De la Guerra in 1924; and W. Haley in 1926. Plans and Profiles of street work, filed by project number: C-1-265, 266, 534, 701, 745, 1088, 1089, 1090, 1125, 1199, 1200, 1201, 1225, Public Works Department, City of Santa Barbara.

13. City Directory, 1929-30; Santa Barbara, Community Development Department, Land Use Controls Division, Building Permit File; Santa Barbara County, Office of the County Assessor, Map Books, #37, #39.

14. The city median of owner families in 1930 was 43.9%. U.S. Census, 1930: Housing.

15. Each household was tallied by street using the City Directory listing of households, which designate home ownership by a small symbol after the occupant's name. The reliability of these ownership designations is difficult to check, but they provide an accurate picture of general ownership trends within the neighborhood.

16. Interview with Isaac Bonilla, 27 May 1981.

17. Arellanes interview, 4 March 1981; Interview with Isaac and Joy Bonilla, 3 April 1981.

18. Interview with Isaac and Joy Bonilla, 27 May 1981.

19. Ibid.

20. Conversation with Mrs. Jennie Sacconaghi Kemp, 13 June 1981. Mrs. Kemp was Joseph Sacconaghi's niece, and was born in 1914 in a home across the street from her uncle's, when it was at 605 Sutton Avenue. The Mandevilles now live in the Sacconaghi house, at 628 Pascual. City Directory, 1915-16; 1922; 1929-30.

21. "What Has Been Built for Low-Rent Housing Here? Answer is Nothing-Except Hoff Heights Project," SBNP, 27 February 1949.

22. Interview with Isaac and Joy Bonilla, 27 May 1981; City Directory, 1929-30.

23. Building Permit File: 618-20 West Canon Perdido Street.

24. City Directory, 1929-30. Occupations given on key streets were classified according to a standard seven-level occupational classification system; Professionals; Proprietors, managers, and officials; clerical workers; skilled workers; semi-skilled workers; unskilled workers; personal and domestic servants. From Kenneth L. Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), Appendix I - "A Note on the Analysis of Occupational Data."

25. Serena interview, 19 May 1981.

26. City Directory, 1897-1950s; Santa Barbara Planning Task Force, Neighborhood Fact Book;

Interviews with L.A. and Berta Lee Kelley, 18 February 1981; Isaac and Joy Bonilla, 27 May 1981; Egidio Serena, 19 May 1981.

27. Bonilla interview, 27 May 1981. Mrs. Bonilla was president of McKinley PTA from 1936 to 1938. Other early residents shared this view of the Ladera Street area. Ruth Hunt remembered that until the 1960s Ladera Street was "boggy," and especially messy after a rain. Interview, 19 May 1981.

28. Conversation with Tim Cobos, retired Bekins employee, 18 May 1981; Bonilla interview, 3 April 1981; City Directory, 1922; 1926.

29. Conversation with Josephine Bonazzola, 13 May 1981.

30. Marco Goggia delivered feed, wood, and the railroad carloads of grapes for neighborhood winemaking from his warehouse on San Pascual Street, now occupied by Jet Drain & Plumbing Service. Interviews with Egidio Serena, 19 May 1981, and Isaac Bonilla, 3 April 1981; City Directory, 1929 to present.

31. City Directory, 1915 to 1942.

32. Bonilla interview, 27 May 1981; City Directory, 1926; 1929-30.

33. City Directory, 1922-35; Interviews with Isaac Bonilla, 3 April 1981; Emilia Arellanes, 3 April 1981; Egidio Serena, 29 May 1981.

34. City Directory, 1929-30. Places of employment were noted after many householders' names. Heads of household are listed in the rear section by street address. Working family members residing at an address can usually be spotted under the main listing by surname. Recently widowed women are so noted.

35. City Directory, 1929-30: lists of householders for Orange Avenue and West Ortega Street.

36. Bonilla interview, 3 April 1981.

37. City Directory, 1929-30: list of West Haley Street householders.

38. Interviews with Isaac and Joy Bonilla, 3 April 1981, 27 May 1981; and Emilia Arellanes, 4 March 1981.

39. Conversation with Josephine Bonazzola, 13 May 1981; City Directory, 1929-30.

40. Bonilla interview, 27 May 1981.

41. Conversation with Jennie Sacconaghi Kemp, 30 April 1981; Interviews with Egidio Serena, 19 May 1981, and Isaac Bonilla, 3 April 1981.

42. Bonilla interview, 3 April 1981.

43. Interviews with Isaac and Joy Bonilla, 27 May 1981; Egidio Serena; Josephine Bonazzola; Jennie Sacconaghi Kemp; Ruth Hunt, 19 May 1981.

44. Robert N. Christian, "A Study of the Historical Development of the Santa Barbara School District" (M.S. Project, University of Southern California, 1963), Appendix C, p. 260.

45. Interview with George Dearmin, McKinley teacher and principal from 1952-75, 15 May 1981. Dearmin recalled that the Superintendent of Schools was fired in 1934 or 1935 for vigorously promoting the construction of McKinley and La Cumbre Junior High Schools at a considerable expense for schools in areas that were then considered to be remote.

46. Bonilla interview, 27 May 1981.

47. Bonilla interview, 27 May 1981.

48. One page flyer in Mrs. Bonilla's possession.

49. Conversation with Ralph McNall, 12 June 1981, Troop 11 scoutmaster since 1929, five years after its founding at the old McKinley School; Bonilla interview, 15 June 1981.

50. Bonilla interview, 27 May 1981.

51. Conversation with Claude Hardesty, McKinley principal from 1939 to 1942 and 1945 to 1948, 20 May 1981.

52. Bonilla interview, 27 May 1981.

53. U.S. Census, 1970, Population Summary, City of Santa Barbara.

54. "What Has Been Built for Low-Rent Housing Here? Answer is Nothing-Except Hoff Heights Project," SBNP, 27 February 1949.

55. Santa Barbara Planning Task Force, Neighborhood Fact Book, p. 23.5.

56. Santa Barbara City Directory, 1940, including Montecito (Los Angeles: Santa Barbara Directory Co., 1941); Santa Barbara City Directory, 1951, including Montecito (Los Angeles: Santa Barbara Directory Co., 1951); Polk's Santa Barbara City Directory, 1960, including Montecito, Goleta, and Hope Ranch Park (Los Angeles: R.L. Polk & Co., 1961); Building Permit Files: particularly 831 Orange Avenue.

57. Building Permit File: particularly 615 San Pascual, 820 Orange Avenue; City Directory, 1940; 1951; 1960. Directory listings illustrate the increases in subdivided households.

58. Building Permit File: 505 Wentworth Avenue.

59. Now, as then, properties are inspected for code violations only after a complaint has been received. The city does not have the staff time to devote to regular, general inspection surveys. Conversation with Anna Plein, Assistant Building Official, Land Use Controls Division, Community Development Department, 15 June 1981.

60. "Boom & Bust or Smooth Transition in Building Costs," SBNP, 18 March 1947, an editorial urging Santa Barbara's building industry

to practice self-regulation in order to increase building activity and lower prices.

61. "Local Building Costs Reported 10 Percent Over L.A.," SBNP, 4 November 1947.

62. Santa Barbara Citizen's Advisory Council (Housing Committee), "Report on Housing Needs in Santa Barbara, California," 18 May 1948.

63. 1947 Zoning Map accompanying Zoning Ordinance #2114, adopted 7 November 1946, City Ordinance Book, City Clerk's Office; "Rezoning Refused in De la Vina Area: Measure Seen as Potentially Disruptive to Community Life," SBNP, 10 August 1956. In 1956 the City Council approved a zoning change from R-2 (duplex) to R-3 (multiple-unit) in the area west of 101 between Haley and Mission Streets.

64. John R. Henderson & William Blurock & Partners, Master Plan Architects, Master Plan for Santa Barbara City College (Newport Beach: WBP Press, 1974).

65. City Directory, 1951.

66. Jesse and Ophelia Looney recall only a few other blacks in the neighborhood in 1963 when they purchased their home at 607 West Ortega Street. The Looneys remember that it took most of their neighbors some time to make friendly gestures. Interview, 7 April 1981.

67. City Directory, 1940; 1951; 1960. Furay's enchilada manufacturing business at 811 San Pascual Street was well-known locally.

68. City Directory, 1929-30; 1940; 1945; 1951; 1960. Neighborhood stores were mentioned in several interviews.

69. City Directory, 1929-1951; Building Permit File: 609 West Haley Street.

70. "6,000 Youngsters Return to School," SBNP, 15 September 1946.

71. Interview with George Dearmin, 15 May 1981.

72. Persistence rate calculated by comparing 1929-30 and 1940 household listings in the City Directories. Due to wide irregularities between some streets, "approximately one-third" is the fairest generalization to make about the number of people who persisted over the decade.

73. City Directory, 1940; 1951; 1960.

74. Observation based on chronological profiles compiled for each address on San Pascual Street, Wentworth Avenue, Orange Avenue, West Ortega Street, Fremont Place, and numerous scattered addresses on each of the remaining streets.

75. U.S. Census, 1950: Housing. The 1940 census determined that forty percent of the city's units were owner-occupied. "City Housing Status Above State's Level," SBNP, 18 May 1942. A tally of ownership on the Lower Westside from the 1940 City Directory indicates that roughly thirty-five percent of the residents were homeowners.

76. City Directory, 1930; 1940; 1951; 1960.
77. Interview with Josephine Montoya,
4 March 1981.
78. Photos were taken in 1963 during westside
freeway construction, Santa Barbara News-Press
photo file; Interviews with Isaac Bonilla, Ed
Serena, Josephine Montoya, Jennie Sacconaghi
Kemp.
79. "State Reports Progress on Cliff Drive
Project," SBNP, 8 December 1968.
80. State Division of Highways report dis-
cussed in "Freeway Housing Impact: City Offered
Opportunity", SBNP, 7 April 1968; Interview with
Harry Califano, Santa Barbara County Welfare
Department, 25 June 1981.
81. "Lower West Side Picked for Renewal,"
SBNP, 18 July 1968; Santa Barbara, Planning
Department, "Proposed Preliminary Plan: Ran-
cheria Redevelopment Project," 18 July 1968.
82. "Plan for Area Redevelopment," SBNP,
24 July 1968.
83. Santa Barbara, Planning Department,
"Chronology of Events Relating to Housing and
Redevelopment in the City of Santa Barbara,"
September 1968, and "Report on Past and Pro-
jected Redevelopment Activities," a one-page
in-house document; "Council Selects East Side
for First Renewal Project," SBNP, 18 September
1968; Interview with Isaac Bonilla, 27 May
1981.

84. "64 Low-Cost Rental Units Planned,"
SBNP, 21 July 1968.
85. City Directory, 1960; 1967; 1970; Phone
conversation with staff person, Ha' Penny Inns,
711 West Cota Street, 6 June 1981.
86. City Directory, 1970; 1976.
87. Santa Barbara Planning Task Force,
Neighborhood Fact Book, p. 23.1.
88. Ibid., pp. 23.3-6, 28.9.
89. Ibid.
90. Santa Barbara, City Housing Authority,
"Public Housing Program Overview 1978"; Phone
conversation with Mrs. Zumdahl, City Housing
Authority; 23 June 1981, "Housing Project Getting
New Life," SBNP, 28 March 1973.
91. John Evarts, "Santa Barbara: A Case Study
in Community Development," in Evarts, Paul Relis
et al., Community Gardens, Past and Present
(Santa Barbara: Community Environmental Council,
1978), p. 15; Phone conversation with Carol
Wilson, City Recreation Department, 5 June
1981.
92. Santa Barbara Planning Task Force,
Neighborhood Fact Book, pp. 23.5-6.
93. Phone interview with Trish Davey, Com-
munity Development Coordinator, Community
Development Department, 2 June 1981; Gale Holland,

"Squeeze Play: Part II - Preserving Our Chicano Community," Santa Barbara News and Review, 25 September 1980.

94. Davey interview.

95. Gale Holland, "Squeeze Play: Part II - Preserving Our Chicano Community," Santa Barbara News and Review, 25 September 1980.

96. Phone interview with Don Combs, Santa Barbara Tenants Union, 11 June 1981.

97. Ibid.

98. "SBTU Pickets Tatman & Boyle," Tenants United, II, 2 (October 1980); Ibid; "Tatman & Boyle Update," Tenants United, II, 3 (December 1980).

99. Phone conversation with Mary Lahey, Community Development Department, 2 September 1981; Carmen Lodise, "Everyone Deserves Credit for New Westside Center," Goleta Valley News, 11 July 1979; Phone interview with Carmen Lodise, Community Action Commission, 3 June 1981. From July to December 1978 Lodise worked under a fellowship from the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges to establish a community center at La Cuesta High School on Ladera Street. He hoped to combine the offerings of human service agencies and educational institutions (particularly Santa Barbara Community College) to provide needed services for Lower Westsiders, an opportunity for neighborhood involvement, and a good use for a school site about to be vacated. Lodise's organizing skills

were instrumental in the establishment of the food co-op, the Lower Westside Neighborhood Planning Council, and the neighborhood center.

100. "Oesta Bajo: The Newsletter of the Lower Westside Neighborhood," a one-page flyer summarizing the October 6 meeting, where major neighborhood problems were discussed; Memorandum from Carmen Lodise to Bruce Wolfe, who would become chairman of the Lower Westside Neighborhood Planning Council, 9 October 1978.

101. "City Council OKs \$63,000 for Lower Westside Center," SBNP, 31 January 1979; "School Properties Put Up for Sale, Lease," SBNP, 6 July 1979; Conversations with unidentified co-op worker, 3 May 1981 and Luis Sanchez, 10 June 1981.

102. Sanchez interviews, 18 February 1981, 10 June 1981; City Council meeting, 9 June 1981.

103. City Council meeting, 9 June 1981; "City to Keep Open Lower Westside Neighborhood Center," SBNP, 10 June 1981.

104. City Council meeting, 9 June 1981.

105. Bonilla interview, 3 April 1981.

106. Comments compiled from assorted interviews, and conversations with unidentified residents on their front porch and at a rummage sale.

107. Lodise interview.

108. Hunt interview; Isaac Bonilla interview, 27 May 1981.

109. Montoya interview.

110. City Council Minutes, 19 June 1973, 15 January 1974.

111. "Harding School Asphalt Becomes Westside Park," SBNP, 23 February 1981.

112. Santa Barbara School Districts, "A Proposal to Close Schools in the Santa Barbara Elementary School District," 15 January 1979.

113. Ibid., pp. 42, 13, 15, 16.

114. Santa Barbara School Districts, Board of Education Minutes, 26 February 1979.

115. Bonazzola interview; Isaac Bonilla interview, 3 April 1981. Phone interview with Richard C. Abney, Crime Analyst, Santa Barbara Police Department, 12 May 1981, in which he cited the following statistics:

<u>FELONY</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Crimes against persons	14	12
Homicides	0	0
Forced Rape	1	0
Attempted Rape	1	1
Armed Robbery	2	2

<u>FELONY</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Strong-Arm Robbery	1	2
Aggravated Assault	9	7
Crimes Against Property	76	91
Commercial Burglary	18	10
Residential Burglary	39	64
Auto Burglary	19	17
Grand Theft (over \$200)	14	15
Vehicle Theft	16	23
TOTAL MAJOR FELONIES	120	141

116. Bonazzola, Serena interviews.